

“So, you want a job with a German company?”
Interviewing Skills for International Companies
For the Middle School Classroom

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Unit Focus: Differences in body language cues across cultures

Big Concepts: Body language cues are interpreted differently by different cultures

Essential Understanding: Every culture has differences that are important in the global economic environment in which we all live and work today.

Essential Questions:

- Are there any international and, in particular, German companies in the area you live? If so, what are the names of the companies, what product(s) do they produce, and what are the cities/countries of origin?
- What are some similarities and differences in culture between your city and the international company’s city/country?
- How might body language be interpreted differently from your culture by the culture of the country where the company originated in an interview?

Related South Carolina Social Studies Standards

7-7.6: Explain the impact of increasing global economic interdependence in the late twentieth century and early twenty-first century.

Language Arts Process Skills: Interviewing skills.

Assessment Type:

1. Writing project (Brochure on country of company’s origin)
2. Role play

Short Scenario for Individual Summative Assessment: You are applying for a job at an international company in your area. You have an interview that you must do well in to be hired. Are there differences in the way your culture would interpret your body language and the way the person’s culture who will interview you would interpret your body language? You will need to research this company, its culture, and interviewing skills. You will need to create a brochure of the company, city, country of origin and cultural differences for the company to which you are applying. You will then be assigned to be an interviewer (person doing the hiring) or an interviewee (person applying for a job) for that company. You will need to look for the appropriate body language for the culture of the company if you are the interviewer or you will need to use the appropriate body language for the culture of the company if you are the interviewee.

Directions/ Criteria for Assessment:

1. Student will create a brochure about an international company within student's region (See rubric for grading parameters).
 - Name of company
 - Type of company (what does the company produce)
 - Town and country of origin for company
 - Cultural differences between town and country of origin for the company and student's town or country (major religions, holidays, language, housing, family structure, etc.)
 - Cultural differences in the interpretation of body language and interviewing skills (eye contact, smiling, laughing, touching, personal space, and time)

2. Student will participate in a role play in which one student is an interviewer and another student is the interviewee for a job with an international company. (Pass/Fail)
 - Interviewer: Having logical written reasons for hiring or not hiring the employee based on body language skills that would represent the country of origin's perspective of culture in the interview.
 - Interviewee: Using enough appropriate body language that reflects the country of origin's perspective of culture and to be hired.

Directions for Exceeding the Standard: The student accurately describes the culture of the international company in a lively, narrative way. The brochure is neat and legible with illustrations. The student provides a map of the location of the company's city of origin. The vocabulary exceeds grade level and the student provides information beyond what is asked for in the assignment.

Lesson 1

One to two class periods (students may finish Activity Sheet #2 for homework)

Materials Needed

- ✓ Activity Sheet #1-List of International Companies in South Carolina
- ✓ Access to Internet (<http://www.sccommerce.com/InternationalFirm.html>)
- ✓ Handout #1: Cross cultural Communication Overview
- ✓ Activity Sheet #2: Cross Cultural Communication

Basic Facts and Knowledge

International companies are major employers of South Carolinians. In some cultures there may be major differences in communication, such as interpreting body language. People seeking employment at one of these companies should be aware of cultural differences to be successful in a job interview.

South Carolina Department of Commerce

“Globalization plays a critical role in the future of successful businesses. It's a fact: Companies engaged in international business are more stable, achieve higher growth rates, and pay higher

wages.....South Carolina is also a leader in attracting international investment, and international firms find that we serve their needs well.”

Instructional Strategies

Provide access to the Internet so that students can collect information on international companies in South Carolina. After completion of Activity Sheet #1 give students a copy of Handout #1 and Activity Sheet #2. Students will read handout and complete activity sheet. Students will then be assigned one international company about which he/she will create a cultural brochure. (Teacher should assign countries so there are a variety of cultures represented.)

Assessment

Students will complete Activity Sheet #1 including as many different countries as possible, one of which is Germany. Students will also complete Activity Sheet #2 from the information in Handout #1.

Lesson 2

One to three class periods (depending on whether this lesson is completed as a class project or as homework)

Materials Needed

- ✓ Access to Internet
- ✓ Trade books
- ✓ Encyclopedias

Basic Facts and Knowledge

Germany and other countries have rich cultures that have some similarities and some differences with the culture of the USA and, in particular SC.

Instruction Strategies

Provide access to the Internet, trade books, and encyclopedias so that students can collect information on the culture of the city and country of origin of the international company he/she was assigned.

Assessment

Students will complete a writing project: making a cultural brochure on an international company. Assessment based on the South Carolina State Department of Education’s writing rubric.

Lesson 3

Two class periods

Materials Needed

- ✓ Activity Sheet #2
- ✓ Access to Internet
- ✓ Interviewer sheet for the culture of origin of the company

Let the students access this body language quiz to see how well they have comprehended the nuances of body language:

Online body language quiz

<http://www.kent.ac.uk/careers/interviews/nvc.htm>

Latin America

http://www.cyborlink.com/besite/latin_america.htm

<http://www.cyborlink.com/besite/mexico.htm>

Asia

<http://www.cyborlink.com/besite/asia.htm>

<http://www.cyborlink.com/besite/china.htm>

<http://www.cyborlink.com/besite/indonesia.htm>

<http://www.cyborlink.com/besite/japan.htm>

Europe

<http://www.cyborlink.com/besite/europe.htm>

<http://www.cyborlink.com/besite/germany.htm>

<http://www.cyborlink.com/besite/france.htm>

<http://www.cyborlink.com/besite/russia.htm>

Middle East

<http://www.cyborlink.com/besite/mideast.htm>

<http://www.cyborlink.com/besite/saudi-arabia.htm>

<http://www.cyborlink.com/besite/india.htm>

<http://www.cyborlink.com/besite/uae.htm>

Basic Facts and Knowledge

Germany and other countries have similarities and differences when compared to the culture of the USA in the way they interrupt body language.

Instruction Strategies

Provide access to the Internet so that students can collect information on the way the culture of the city and country of origin of the international company interrupts body language. The teacher will then assign pairs of students to be an interviewer and an interviewee.

Assessment

Students will complete Activity Sheet #2 and then role play being in a job interview as interviewer or interviewee. Interviewer will use interviewer sheet to determine whether or not the interviewee is hired. This activity will be assessed as a pass or fail based on successful explanation by the interviewer as to why or why not the interviewee is hired or being successfully hired by the interviewee.

Activity Sheet #1 - International Companies in South Carolina

List 10 companies from as many of the following countries as possible (making sure to have at least one from Germany): China, India, Japan, Germany, France, Russia, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Republic, and Mexico.

Name of Company	Product(s) Made by Company	City of Origin	Country of Origin
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			
7.			
8.			
9.			
10.			

Activity Sheet #2 - Cross Cultural Communication

List any differences between cultures

Culture	Eye Contact	Smiling	Laughing	Touching	Personal Space	Time
USA						
Europe						
Asia						
Latin America						
Middle East						

Handout #1: Cross-Cultural Communication Overview

Using effective cross-cultural communication is an important part of getting a job with an international company. Within our school area you should have learned that there are 450 international companies, originating in over 29 countries. With this many international companies it is quite likely that you will be applying for a job with one of them in the future. Studies show that more than 60% of communication is nonverbal and will be remembered long after your actual words. Many cultures determine the seriousness of your message by your actions during your delivery. While one culture may interpret eye contact, smiling, laughing, touching, personal space and punctuality in a certain way, another culture may interpret a totally opposite meaning from the same behavior. This lesson will provide you with some general information to help you observe and understand the behaviors of different cultures and thus have the ability to make a good impression in your interview to be hired.

Eye Contact: Most U.S. children are taught to look at the teacher or parent when they are being scolded and during interpersonal communication in general. However, in some cultures, looking down is considered a sign of respect for the person who is scolding them. Many adult Americans regard someone who does not look them in the eye as untrustworthy. However, some cultures may regard direct eye contact as confrontational. It is often considered to be rude or aggressive to look into someone's eyes for more than 4 or 5 seconds.

Smiling: Rather than being a sign of friendliness, some cultures regard smiling as false, overbearing, or worse. Smiles may disguise embarrassment, mask bereavement, and barely conceal rage, while happiness may hide behind a straight face. People from different cultures express acceptance in unfamiliar ways (e.g., straight faced, eyes closed, heads in a bowed position). A smile and a head nod may not indicate acceptance or agreement. It is often a polite gesture, and not one of agreement or understanding.

Laughing: In some cultures, laughing is an expression of concern, embarrassment, or distress. Do not assume someone is laughing at you; they may be expressing distress regarding the situation.

Touching: In many cultures, it is considered improper to touch a stranger. In one study, conversations in outdoor cafes in different countries were observed. The number of casual touches per hour was counted. A total of 180 touches per hour were recorded in San Juan, Puerto Rico; two per hour in Florida, and zero per hour in London. When in doubt, do not touch, other than a formal handshake. Do not touch with the left hand, which in many cultures is considered taboo.

Personal Space: In the United States, many people unconsciously stand an arm's length apart. In some Asian cultures, people stand even farther apart. In some Hispanic or Latino cultures, people are comfortable standing closer to each other than arm's length.

Time: Different cultures have different concepts of punctuality. When some people agree to meet at a certain time, 8:00 for example, they see 8:00 as a displaced point in time when the meeting is scheduled to begin, and anyone who arrives after 8:00 is considered late. Other cultures see the meeting time as a diffused point in time, and anyone who arrives between 8:00 and 8:30 is considered punctual. However, do not interpret this as license for you to be late. You must be on time, but you must also be prepared to be delayed.

Here are some very typical body language positions that **American** interviewers look for while interviewing potential employees in

- Crossed arms - means that the person is in a defensive and reserved mood.
- Crossed arms and legs - means that the person feels very reserved and suspicious.
- Open arms and hands - means that the person is open and receptive.
- Standing before you with his/her hands inside the pockets - means he/she is not sure or feels suspicious.
- Sitting in a chair shaking one of the legs - means he/she feels nervous and uncomfortable.
- If his/her eyes are downcast and face turned away - means he/she is not interested in what you are saying
- With the palm of the hand holding or stroking his chin - means he/she is in an evaluating position and being critical
- Leaning back in his/her chair with both hands clasped behind his/her head - means he/she is in an analytical mood, but it is also a gesture of superiority
- Rubbing or touching his/her nose when answering a question - means he/she is not telling the complete truth
- If he/she maintains good eye contact and he/she smiles in a relaxed and happy way - means he/she is definitely receptive to you
- Rubbing the back of his/her head or rubbing or touching the back of his/her neck - means the conversation is not really interesting
- If he/she moves his/her body and sits with his/her feet and body pointing towards a door - means he/she wants to end the conversation and leave the room

As you can see, interviewers interpret a lot about you as a person from your body language alone, and different cultures interpret this body language in different ways. So what might be interpreted as a wonderful interview for a job with an American might be interpreted very differently by someone from another culture.

Interviewer – Asian

List the characteristics of the body language for the culture of the company for which you are doing the interviewing. Then list any characteristics in body language that the interviewee displayed. At the end of the interview determine if the interviewee displayed at least four of the correct characteristics of the culture's body language. If so, he/she is hired.

Culture	Eye Contact	Smiling	Laughing	Touching	Personal Space
Country:					

Interviewer – European

List the characteristics of the body language for the culture of the company for which you are doing the interviewing. Then list any characteristics in body language that the interviewee displayed. At the end of the interview determine if the interviewee displayed at least four of the correct characteristics of the culture's body language. If so, he/she is hired.

Culture	Eye Contact	Smiling	Laughing	Touching	Personal Space
Country:					

Interviewer – Latin American

List the characteristics of the body language for the culture of the company for which you are doing the interviewing. Then list any characteristics in body language that the interviewee displayed. At the end of the interview determine if the interviewee displayed at least four of the correct characteristics of the culture's body language. If so, he/she is hired.

Culture	Eye Contact	Smiling	Laughing	Touching	Personal Space
Country:					

Interviewer – Middle Eastern

List the characteristics of the body language for the culture of the company for which you are doing the interviewing. Then list any characteristics in body language that the interviewee displayed. At the end of the interview determine if the interviewee displayed at least four of the correct characteristics of the culture's body language. If so, he/she is hired.

Culture	Eye Contact	Smiling	Laughing	Touching	Personal Space
Country:					

Rubric for Brochure

SCORE	CONTENT/DEVELOPMENT	ORGANIZATION	VOICE	CONVENTIONS
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presents a clear central idea about the topic • Fully develops the central idea with specific, relevant details • Sustains focus on central idea throughout the writing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has a clear introduction, body, and conclusion. • Provides a smooth progression of ideas throughout the writing. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minor errors in standard written English may be present.
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presents a central idea about the topic • Develops the central idea but details are general, or the elaboration may be uneven • Focus may shift slightly, but is generally sustained 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has an introduction, body, and conclusion. • Provides a logical progression of ideas throughout the writing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses precise and/or vivid vocabulary appropriate for the topic • Phrasing is effective, not predictable or obvious • Varies sentence structure to promote rhythmic reading • Strongly aware of audience and task; tone is consistent and appropriate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Errors in standard written English may be present; however, these errors do not interfere with the writer’s meaning.
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central idea may be unclear • Details may be sparse; more information is needed to clarify the central idea • Focus may shift or be lost causing confusion for the reader 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attempts an introduction, body, and conclusion; however, one or more of these components could be weak or ineffective. • Provides a simplistic, repetitious, or somewhat random progression of ideas throughout the writing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses both general and precise vocabulary • Phrasing may not be effective, and may be predictable or obvious • Some sentence variety results in reading that is somewhat rhythmic; may be mechanical • Aware of audience and task; tone is appropriate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A pattern of errors in more than one category (e.g., capitalization, spelling, punctuation, sentence formation) of standard written English is present; these errors interfere somewhat with the writer’s meaning.
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is no clear central idea • Details are absent or confusing • There is no sense of focus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attempts an introduction, body, and conclusion; however, one or more of these components could be absent or confusing. • Presents information in a random or illogical order throughout the writing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses simple vocabulary • Phrasing repetitive or confusing • There is little sentence variety; reading is monotonous • There is little awareness of audience and task; tone may be inappropriate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequent and serious errors in more than one category (e.g., capitalization, spelling, punctuation, sentence formation) of standard written English are present; these errors severely interfere with the writer’s meaning.